



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
3 March 2014

English only

Economic Commission for Europe

Conference of European Statisticians

Sixty-second plenary session

Paris, 9-11 April 2014

Item 8 (a) of the provisional agenda

Reports on the work of the Conference of European Statisticians, its Bureau and Teams of Specialists

Report of the seminar on statistical data collection

Prepared by the Secretariat

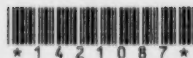
Addendum

Summary

This document presents the outcomes of the Seminar on Statistical Data Collection held in Geneva on 25-27 September 2013. The seminar addressed strategic and methodological issues related to data collection in a changing environment, in which mixed-mode and multi-source data collections are becoming more prominent. It also considered the potential of new types of data sources. Participants welcomed this unique forum to exchange ideas and experiences with colleagues from around the world, and proposed a number of follow-up actions, which are being considered within the new group structure under the High-Level Group on the Modernisation of Statistical Production and Services.

This document is submitted to the Conference of European Statisticians for information.

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I. Introduction

1. The second Seminar on Statistical Data Collection was held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 25-27 September 2013. It was attended in person by participants from Australia, Azerbaijan, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Mongolia, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Singapore, Slovenia, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat), the International Labour Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the World Intellectual Property Organization were also represented. Representatives of New Zealand and the United States of America participated remotely via video link.
2. The seminar considered the following substantive topics:
 - (a) Centralising data collection;
 - (b) Managing data collection functions in a changing environment;
 - (c) Improving the respondent experience;
 - (d) Multiple modes of data collection;
 - (e) Integration and management of new data sources.
3. Details of the presentations and discussions in each of these sessions can be found in the Annex to this report.
4. Seminar participants elected Mr J. Dunne (Ireland) to chair the seminar.
5. The seminar was organized by a steering group consisting of Ms J. Borowik (Australia), Mr J. Dunne (Ireland), Mr J. Eltinge (United States of America), Mr J. Erikson (Sweden), Mr H. Hermens (the Netherlands), Ms T. Sillajõe (Estonia) and Ms A. White (New Zealand), with secretariat support from Mr S. Vale and Ms F. Willis-Núñez (UNECE). Members of the steering group acted as session organizers.

II. Recommendations for future work

6. Participants discussed ideas for future work on statistical data collection and related topics to be undertaken within the coordinating framework of UNECE under the new Modernisation Committee on Statistical Products and Sources (introduced during the work seminar). Proposals included those listed below, which emerged during small group discussions and during the plenary session on future work, as well as others which are already included as work packages within the proposal for a 2014 project of the High Level Group for Modernisation of Statistical Production and Services, and which are therefore not listed separately here.
7. Ideas proposed for future work activities to be led by UNECE included:
 - (a) Continue to hold seminars on data collection on an annual or biennial basis;
 - (b) Combine data collection and dissemination/communication seminars to permit some joint elements;
 - (c) Provide a platform for sharing materials (case studies, strategy documents, research results, collection tools) amongst the data collection community via electronic repositories and/or a 'lessons learned database';

(d) Collate examples of how the Generic Statistical Information Model has been or could be used to improve the data collection process.

8. Topics proposed for the focus of future activities included, amongst others:

(a) More examples of transitioning to centralized systems, especially of fast transitioning; advantages & disadvantages;

(b) Experiences from other countries and best practices in mixed mode or web data collection (experiments, parallelisms, survey designs);

(c) Measuring cost savings from mode changes;

(d) Architecture for data collection;

(e) Management systems for all modes.

III. Closing of the meeting

9. In his concluding remarks, the chair identified common threads running throughout the five sessions: cost as a driver of change; the need to keep respondents at the centre of our activities; the importance of communication; and the need to focus on all aspects of quality to ensure that we deliver statistics that are fit for purpose. Throughout the seminar it was apparent that 'togetherness'—both between different parts of a given statistical organization and between different organizations—would be key to ensuring progress. The chair noted that a continuous cycle of doing and learning (including learning from failures as well as successes) was an important tool for learning and improving.

IV. Adoption of the report

10. The participants adopted the draft report before the seminar adjourned.

V. Further Information

11. All background documents and presentations for the meeting are available on the website of the UNECE Statistical Division:

www.unece.org/stats/documents/2013.09.coll.html